

REMARKS

Claims 198-238 are pending in the present patent application. The Examiner has rejected claims 198-238. Applicant has canceled claim 200 as being duplicative and amended claims 198, 199, 201-208, 210, 212, 213, 216, 217, 218, 220, 221-227, 230, 231, and 232. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of claims 198, 199, 202 - 205, 206 - 298, 210, 212, 216, 220- 223, 225, 226, 228, 230 - 232, 234, 235 and 238 in view of at least the following amendments and remarks.

I. Objections to Drawings

The Examiner states:

The drawings are objected to by the Examiner for numerous informalities:

For example,

- They are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(4) because reference characters "108" (FIG. 1) and "114" (FIG. 20) have both been used to designate "keyboard".
- They are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(4) because reference character "114" has been used to designate both "coupling" (FIG. 1) and "keyboard" (FIG. 20); "102" has been used to designate both "user computer" (FIG. 1) and "CPU" (FIG. 20).
- They are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they do not include the following reference sign(s) mentioned in the description: "118" (page 28, line 3), "15014" (page 28, line 8), "15015" (page 28, line 9), "15016" (page 28, line 23).

Applicant has amended Figure 20 by changing "114" to "108" and by changing "102" to "2102". The changes are indicated in red. Formal drawings will be submitted

upon allowance of the present case. In addition, Applicant submits a clean copy and marked up copy of replacement pages of the "Detailed Description" of the specification.

II. Objections to Specification

The Examiner states:

The disclosure is objected to because of numerous informalities:

For example,

- Page 25, line 20, should "114" after "keyboard" be --18--?
- Page 26, line 14, should "114" after "Coupling" be --134--?
- Page 29, line 7, should "120" after "interface" be --10020--?
- Page 29, line 8, should "136" after "link" be --10021--?
- Page 30, line 6, before "150", --system-- should be inserted.
- Page 59, line 12, should "12" after "computer" be --122--?

Applicant submits a clean copy and marked up copy of replacement pages of the "Detailed Description" of the specification to amend the specification as follows:

- Page 25, line 20, please replace "114" after "keyboard" with--18--.
- Page 26, line 14, please replace "114" after "Coupling" with --134--.
- Page 28, line 3: please replace "118" with --10018--.
- Page 28, line 4: please replace "102" with --2102--.
- Page 28, line 3: please replace "114" with --108--.
- Page 28, line 8: please replace "15014" with --10014--.
- Page 28, line 9: please replace "15015" with --10015--.

- Page 28, line 10: please replace "102" with --2102--.
- Page 28, line 23: please replace "15016" with --10016--.
- Page 29, line 7, please replace "120" after "interface" with --10020--.
- Page 29, line 8, please replace "136" after "link" with --10021--.
- Page 30, line 6, please insert --system--before "150".
- Page 59, line 12, please replace "12" after "computer" with --122--.

III. Claim Objections

Applicant has cancelled claim 200, as duplicating claim 199.

IV. Rejection of Claims 202, 206, 207, 208 and 212 Based on 35 U.S.C. §112

The Examiner rejected claims 202, 206, 207, 208 and 212 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner states:

The preamble of the independent claim 198 specifies that "A system for secure processing of value-bearing items (VBIs) in a computer network" is being claimed. Of course, "A system for secure processing of value-bearing items (VBIs) in a computer network" does not include the value-bearing items (VBIs). However, the language "value-bearing item is a mail piece." in lines 1-2 of claim 202 as well as the language in claim 206, 207, 208 and 212 includes the value-bearing item as a positive element of the claimed subject matter. Hence, the bodies of the claims are not commensurate with their preamble.

Applicant has appropriately amended claim 198.

V. Rejection of Claims 198-238 Based on 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner has rejected claims 198-238 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Cordery et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,151,590) in view of Kara (U.S. Patent No. 5,822,739). Applicant respectfully disagrees and submits that independent claims 198-238 are allowable for at least the following reasons stated below.

A. Independent Claims 198 and 216

Regarding independent claims 198 and 216; the Examiner states:

Cordery discloses a system for secure processing of value-bearing items (VBIs) in a computer network comprising:

a plurality of user terminals (e.g., elements 12') coupled to a computer network (e.g., an element 1);

a database (e.g., a dynamic link library 40) coupled to said network and remote from said plurality of user terminals; and

a server system (e.g., element 12) coupled to said network comprising a cryptographic device (e.g., a vault including an encryption module 50) for performing secure VBI functions.

Re claim 198: Cordery does not explicitly disclose that the database is for storing information about one or more users using said plurality of user terminals and the information stored in the database is utilized for performing VBI functions. However, Cordery discloses that DLL 40 stores transaction records reflecting the usage of postal funds vault 20 (col. 4, lines 23-25). Further, Kara discloses the use of an information record of prepaid postage credit to generate postage (e.g., col. 7, lines 14-17). Thus, it would have been within the level of ordinary skill in the art to modify the system of Cordery by adopting the teaching of Kara to further facilitate the functions of the claimed system.

[...]

Re claims 216-227: The claimed method would have been obvious to use the system which would have been obvious Cordery in view of Kara as stated supra (claims 198-200 and 202-208).

Applicant respectfully disagrees and submits that:

1. Independent Claims 198 and 216 (as amended) are allowed because the current application claims the benefit of an issued patent that predates the Cordery and Kara references relied upon by the Examiner as the basis of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection.

This application is a continuation of application Serial No. 08/482,429, filed June 7, 1995 (now U. S. Patent No. 5,638,513) and application Serial No. 08/178,398, filed December 22, 1993 (now U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411). The Cordery patent was filed on December 19, 1995 and the Kara patent was filed on October 2, 1996. Applicant respectfully submits that the subject matter of independent claims 198 and 216 is based on the detailed description of U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411 and therefore entitled to priority over the Cordery and Kara references.

As an example of why the claimed embodiments of the invention are entitled to such a priority claim, it is useful to compare the language of claim 198 with relevant text from U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411. Claim 198 (as amended) states:

198. (ONCE AMENDED) A system for transferring items having value via a computer network comprising:
a plurality of user terminals coupled to a computer network;
a database system coupled to said network and remote from said plurality of user terminals for storing information about one or more users using said plurality of user terminals; and
a server system coupled to said network, said server system comprising cryptographic capabilities for transferring an item having value utilizing said information stored in said database system.

The basis for the claimed embodiments can be found in at least the following locations of U.S. Patent No. 5,495,411.

Line 3 of claim 198, "a plurality of user terminals coupled to a computer network" is disclosed, for example, at column 3, lines 6 - 11 of U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411 which states:

The system of the present invention comprises a plurality of remote computers, communication modems, a multiuser communication modem, a database computer, and a memory system. The user connects the remote computer to the database of the central rental facility using methods well-known in the art of computer communications.

Lines 4 - 6 of claim 198, "a database system coupled to said network and remote from said plurality of user terminals for storing information about one or more users using said plurality of user terminals", are disclosed in the paragraph quoted above with regard to the network and plurality of user terminals and at column 3, lines 24 - 26 of U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411 where reference is made to information about one or more users in a user registration database:

The user registration database contains information about each user that is stored in a separate file for each user.

Lines 7 - 9 of claim 198, contains the elements "a server system coupled to said network, said server system comprising cryptographic capabilities for transferring an item having value utilizing said information stored in said database system." At column 7, lines 56-57 U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411 states "the database computer 122 includes a

Serial No. 09/668,421

communication manager 202.” Column 6, lines 39-44 illustrates that communication manager 202 may interconnect the server computer with a network (e.g., via any communication path 136A). An example of the use of cryptographic capabilities is described at column 9, lines 29-32 which states “the multiuser controller 222 of the database computer 122 includes encryption and decryption capabilities.” An example of the transfer of “items having value” is described at column 13, lines 23 – 26 where, a software application is transferred from the database computer 122 to the user computer 102.” Finally, “utilizing said information stored in said database system” is described at column 3, lines 24 - 26 of U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411 where a reference is made to information about one or more users in a user registration database, and at column 3, lines 26 - 29 where the user validation module utilizes information in the user registration database.

For at least these reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the embodiment described in claim 198 is fully disclosed by U. S. Patent No. 5,495,411 and therefore entitled to claim priority over the Cordery and Kara references. Similarly, claim 216 (which is directed to a different embodiment of the invention, but contains many of the same limitations as claim 198) is also entitled to claim priority over the Cordery and Kara references for at least the reasons stated above.

Because both the Cordery and Kara references cannot be considered prior art for purposes of this examination, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 198 and 216 are allowable. The accompanying dependent claims 199, 201 – 215, 217 – 227 being dependent upon respective allowable base claims are also allowable for at least the reasons stated.

2. Even if the Cordery and Kara references are prior art (which Applicant submits they are not), these references either alone or in combination do not teach, suggest, or describe a database system as claimed in independent claims 198 and 216.

a.) Cordery (U.S. Patent No. 6,151,590)

The Examiner admits that “Cordery does not explicitly disclose that the database is for storing information about one or more users using said plurality of user terminals and the information stored in the database is utilized for performing VBI functions.” The Examiner takes the position that Cordery discloses the claimed invention because Cordery contains a “DLL 40 [that] stores transaction records reflecting the usage of postal funds vault 20.”

Applicant respectfully disagrees. A Dynamic-Link Library (DLL) is not a database system for storing information about one or more users using the user terminals (see e.g., claims 198 and 216). Rather a DLL, as those of ordinary skill in the art would understand the term and as it is used in Cordery, is an executable file that is to be loaded into memory only when needed by a calling program. For instance, the Computer Dictionary, (Microsoft Press, 1997) defines a DLL as:

A feature of the Microsoft Windows family of operating systems and OS/2 that allows executable routines to be stored separately as files with DLL extensions and to be loaded only when needed by a program. A dynamic-link library has several advantages. First, it does not consume any memory until it is used. Second, because a dynamic-link library is a separate file, a programmer can make corrections or improvements to only that module without affecting the operation of the calling program or any other dynamic-link library. Finally, a programmer can use the same dynamic-link library with other programs.

Cordery does not adopt a specialized meaning of the term DLL and therefore the term should be defined as it is commonly understood by those in the art (*See e.g., Texas Digital Systems, Inc. v. Telegenix, 2002 WL 31307212 (Fed.Cir.(Tex.))*). The DLL described in Cordery is part executable file. An executable file is very different from the scalable database system of the claimed invention.

In addition, Cordery does not suggest or provide any motivation to use a database system in place of the DLL. According to the MPEP §2143.01 "Obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either explicitly or implicitly in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art." Here there is no such motivation. One of ordinary skill in the art would not have a reasonable expectation that a database system could be used to replace the functionality of the DLL described in Cordery. Database Systems are not executable files. If a database system were used in place of a DLL, the executable functions implemented by the DLL would not properly execute. Since Cordery lacks any description or suggestion of a database for storing information about one or more users using said plurality of user terminals and does not provide any motivation to one of ordinary skill in the art to use such a database system, Applicant respectfully

Serial No. 09/668,421

requests that independent claims 198 and 216, as well as their accompanying dependencies, be placed in condition for allowance.

b.) Kara (U.S. Patent No. 5,822,739)

To support the rejection of claims 198 and 216, the Examiner states that “Kara discloses the use of an information record of prepaid postage credit to generate postage (e.g., col. 7, lines 14-17). Thus, it would have been within the level of ordinary skill in the art to modify the system of Cordery by adopting the teaching of Kara to further facilitate the functions of the claimed system.” Applicant respectfully disagrees. An element of the claimed invention is a database coupled to a network and remote from a plurality of user terminals for storing information about one or more users using the plurality of user terminals. Kara describes “a database of current postal addresses [...] at the remote meter site and utilized by the Meter program to verify the current address when postage is demanded.” A database of current postal addresses is not a database system of information about one or more users using a plurality of user terminals. Since Kara also lacks elements of the claimed invention Kara cannot teach, suggest or describe the claimed invention.

B. Dependent Claims 199, 201 – 215, 217 – 227

Regarding dependent claims 199, 201 – 215, 217 – 227 the Examiner states:

Re claims 199 and 200: Neither Cordery nor Kara explicitly discloses the use of a plurality of postal security device data stored in the database for ensuring authenticity or authority of each user, wherein each postal security device data is related to one of the users [sic] and the postal security device data related to the one of the users is loaded into the cryptographic device when one of the users requests to print a value-

bearing item. However, in col. 13, lines 31-45 thereof, Kara discloses that the server (e.g., the Meter program) verifies whether the proper funding is available for the transaction requested by the user. Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to employ a plurality of postal security device data (e.g., prepaid postage credit) stored in the database for ensuring authenticity or authority of each user (e.g., to prevent fraud by unauthorized users), wherein each postal security device data is related to one of the users and the postal security device data related to the one of the users is loaded into the cryptographic device when one of the users requests to print a value-bearing item (e.g., to prevent fraud by unauthorized users).

Re claims 201, 202, 202 [sic], 203, and 204: Cordery discloses:

- database comprises data for creating indicium, account maintenance, and revenue protection (e.g., col. 6, lines 49-53)
- the value-bearing item is a mail-piece (e.g., postage for a mail)
- the cryptographic device generates a digital signature (e.g., digital token).
- the cryptographic device encrypts the request information (col. 3, line 65-col. 4, line 3).

Re claim 205: In Cordery, it would have been inherent to generate data sufficient to print a postal indicium in compliance with postal service regulation on said mail piece, since otherwise the system would not work.

Re claims 206 and 208: Cordery discloses that his system is a value printing system without explicit disclosure of the value-bearing system being a ticket or a coupon. However, Kara discloses a ticket or any form of indicia as value-bearing items (col. 15, lines 23-32). Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use any value-bearing items, e.g., a ticket, coupon, certificate, check, etc., as disclosed by Kara.

Re claim 207: Cordery does not explicitly disclose the use of a bar code. However, as shown by Kara, the use of a bar code with a system of the sort here involved is well known.

Re claims 209-215: Cordery discloses the postal security device data comprising an ascending register value, a descending register value, a respective cryptographic device ID, and an indicium key certificate serial number; encryption keys; and the use of a password (e.g., col. 4, line 55-

col. 7, line 15). Cordery does not explicitly disclose the claimed public and private keys. However, as shown by Kara (e.g., col. 10, lines 18-29), the claimed public/private key feature is well-known encryption method in the art.

Re claims 216-227: The claimed method would have been obvious to use the system which would have been obvious Cordery in view of Kara as stated supra (claims 198-200 and 202-208)

Applicant respectfully disagrees and submits that dependent claims 199, 201 – 215, 217 – 227 are allowable for at least the following reasons:

1. Claim 199 is allowable because the Examiner admits that neither the Cordery reference nor the Kara reference teach, suggest, or describe postal security device data related to one of the users and associated with the claimed cryptographic capabilities when the user requests to print an item having value.

The Examiner admits that Cordery and Kara both lack the limitations of claim 199. Accordingly, claim 199 in combination with claim 198 should be placed in condition for allowance. The fact that Kara “verifies whether the proper funding is available for the transaction requested by the user” does not make the use of it obvious to have postal security device data related to one of the users and associated with the claimed cryptographic capabilities when the user requests to print an item having value. For instance, nothing in Kara suggests the use of postal security device data for ensuring the authenticity of each of said one or more users using the claimed cryptographic capabilities. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that claim 199 be placed in condition for allowance.

2. Claims 199 and 201- 209, and 212-215 being dependent upon allowable base claims thereby contain allowable subject matter and should also be placed in condition for allowance.

3. Claims 210 is allowable because neither Cordery nor Kara teach, suggest, or describe using a private key to sign device status responses and the item having value which in conjunction with a public key certificate demonstrates the postal security device and the item having value are authentic.

The Examiner concludes that claim 210 is obvious because Kara describes the claimed public/private key feature and that this feature is a well-know cryptographic method. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Kara and Cordery both lack any discussion or suggestion of using public/private key in the specific way that is claimed. For instance, neither of the cited references disclose or suggest a system that utilizes a private key to sign device status responses and the item having value, which in conjunction with the public key certificate demonstrates that the postal security device and the item having value are authentic. For at least these reasons and because claim 210 is dependent upon an allowable base claim, Applicant respectfully requests that claim 210 be placed in condition for allowance.

5. Claim 211 is allowable because Kara does not discuss using a private key to sign device status responses.

The claimed invention specifically states in claim 211 that the private key can be used to sign device status responses. Nothing in Kara or Cordery teach, suggest, or describe, the usage of a private key in this way. Moreover, claim 211 is dependent upon an allowable base claim. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that claim 211 be allowed.

C. Independent Claim 228 and Dependent Claims 229-238

Regarding independent claim 228 and dependent claims 229-238, the Examiner states:

Re claims 228-238: As stated supra, the claimed method would have been obvious Cordery in view of Kara (claims 198 and 201-207, 209 and 210) including the step of printing an image (e.g., FIG. 7 of Cordery) except for the use of a plurality of cryptographic devices. However, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to employ any number of servers or cryptographic devices as desired, since it has been held that mere duplication of the essential working parts of a device involves only routine skill in the art. *St. Regis Paper Co. v. Bemis Co.*, 193 USPQ 8.

Applicant respectfully disagrees. Independent claim 228 contains additional elements not specifically called out in independent claims 198 and 216. For instance, claim 228 contains the step of assigning a postal security device data to the requesting user, wherein the postal security device data may be executed on any of the plurality of cryptographic devices. The Examiner does not point out where Kara or Cordery describe such a step. Nowhere in either reference is there mention of executing postal security device data on any of the plurality of cryptographic devices. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that claim 228 be allowed. Claims 229 – 238 being dependent upon

Serial No. 09/668,421

allowable base claims thereby contain allowable subject matter and should also be placed in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that pending claims 198, 199 and 201 - 238 are patentably distinct from the prior art of record and in condition for allowance. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that pending claims 198, 199 and 201 - 238 be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

THE HECKER LAW GROUP

Date: October 24, 2002

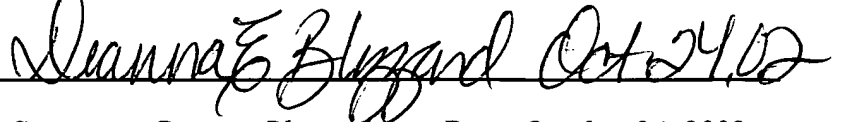
By: 

Gary A. Hecker

THE HECKER LAW GROUP
1925 Century Park East
Suite 2300
Los Angeles, California 90067
(310) 286-0377

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

This is to certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231 on October 24, 2002.



Signature: Deanna Blizzard

Date: October 24, 2002



computer 102 into the memory of the user computer 102. In step 608, the rental application is executed. In step 610, the normal flow of the rental application is performed. Execution continues at step 616. In step 612, in parallel with the normal flow process of step 610, the asynchronous header password verification process is performed without transferring the rental application. In step 614, a message for an unsuccessful connection is sent to the rental application. Execution continues at step 616. In step 616, the rental application is terminated. In step 618, the rental session is terminated.

Figures 7A-7B are flow diagrams illustrating step 612 of Figure 6 for performing the asynchronous header password verification process after connecting to the database computer ~~12~~122 without, however, transferring the rental application from the database computer 122. In step 702, the password verification process is started. In step 704, communication is established between the user and database computers using the communication manager of the present invention. In decision 706, a check is made to determine if communication is established using the communication manager. When decision block 706 returns false (no), execution continues at step 720. When decision block 706 returns true (yes), execution continues at step 708.

In step 708, a rental application transfer time request is created using the user identifier and the application identifier. In step 710, the rental application transfer time request is encrypted. In step 712, the rental application transfer time request is sent to the multi-user controller 222 through the communication manager. In decision block 714, a check is made

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packet data communication network now commonly referred to as the "Internet" 136A. Local network 10022 and Internet 136A both use electrical, electromagnetic or optical signals which carry digital data streams. The signals through the various networks and the signals on network link 10021 and through communication interface 10020, which carry the digital data to and from computer system150, are exemplary forms of carrier waves transporting the information.

In another embodiment, computer system 150 sends messages and receives data, including program code, through the network(s), network link 10021, and communication interface 120. In the Internet example, server 180 might transmit a requested code for an application program through Internet 136A, ISP 10024, local network 10022 and communication interface 120. In accord with one embodiment of the invention, one such downloaded application is the on-line postage system software described herein.

In one embodiment received code may be executed by CPU 102 as it is received, and/or stored in mass storage 10012, or other non-volatile storage for later execution. In this manner, computer 150 may obtain application code in the form of a carrier wave.

The computer systems described above are for purposes of example only. An embodiment of the invention may be implemented in any type of computer system or programming or processing environment.

pixel data stored in video memory 15014 to a raster signal suitable for use by monitor 104. Monitor 104 is a type of monitor suitable for displaying graphic images.

Computer system 150, as illustrated by figure 22, in one embodiment includes a communication interface 10020 coupled to bus 10018. Communication interface ~~120~~10020 provides a two-way data communication coupling via a network link ~~136A~~10021 to a local network 10022. For example, if communication interface 10020 is an integrated services digital network (ISDN) card or a modem, communication interface 10020 provides a data communication connection to the corresponding type of telephone line, which comprises part of network link 136A. If communication interface 10020 is a local area network (LAN) card, communication interface 10020 provides a data communication connection via network link 136A to a compatible LAN. Wireless links are also possible. In any such implementation, communication interface 10020 sends and receives electrical, electromagnetic or optical signals which carry digital data streams representing various types of information.

According to an embodiment of the current invention, as illustrated in figure 22, network link 10021 provides data communication through one or more networks to other data devices. For example, network link 10021 may provide a connection through local network 10022 to host computer 10023 or to data equipment operated by an Internet Service Provider (ISP) 10024. ISP 10024 in turn provides data communication services through the world wide

As illustrated in Figures 1, 20, 21, and 22, client system 150 includes a video memory 10014, main memory 10015 and mass storage 10012, all coupled to bi-directional system bus ~~118~~ 10018 along with keyboard ~~114~~ 108, mouse 107 and CPU ~~102~~ 102. The mass storage 10012 may include both fixed and removable media, such as magnetic, optical or magnetic optical storage systems or any other available mass storage technology. Bus 10018 may contain, for example, thirty-two address lines for addressing video memory ~~15014~~ 10014 or main memory ~~15015~~ 10015. The system bus 10018 also includes, for example, a 32-bit data bus for transferring data between and among the components, such as CPU ~~102~~ 102, main memory 10015, video memory 10014 and mass storage 10012. Alternatively, multiplex data/address lines may be used instead of separate data and address lines.

Figure 22 illustrates one embodiment of the invention, where the CPU 102 is a microprocessor manufactured by Motorola, such as the 680X0 processor or a microprocessor manufactured by Intel, such as the 80X86, or Pentium processor, or a SPARC microprocessor from Sun Microsystems. However, any other suitable microprocessor or microcomputer may be utilized. Main memory 15015 is comprised of dynamic random access memory (DRAM). Video memory 10014 is a dual-ported video random access memory. One port of the video memory 10014 is coupled to video amplifier ~~15016~~ 10016. The video amplifier ~~15016~~ 10016 is used to drive the cathode ray tube (CRT) raster monitor 104. Video amplifier 10016 is well known in the art and may be implemented by any suitable apparatus. This circuitry converts

Modem 106 of remote user computer system 150 is coupled to multi-user communication modem 126 by communication path 136A. In one embodiment of the present invention, communication path 136A is a telephone transmission line. In another embodiment, communication path 136A includes a means of communication through available Internet service providers or Systems. Thus, the present invention is not limited to a telephone transmission line, and other communication paths may be utilized without departing from the scope of the present invention. Multi-user modem 126 is coupled to a plurality of communication paths 136A-136C for establishing communications with a plurality of remote user computer systems concurrently. Multi-user modem 126 is connected to database computer 122 by coupling 120. Coupling 132 connects database computer 122 to display 124 for providing output to an operator. Coupling ~~114~~134 connects keyboard 128 to database computer 122 for providing input from an operator while a single keyboard 128 and display device 124 are illustrated in Figure 1, it should be apparent to a person skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced with a plurality of such devices coupled to the database computer.

The user computer 102 of the remote user computer system 150 comprises a processing means coupled to main memory (e.g., random access memory RAM and/or read only memory ROM), secondary storage means (e.g., media storage systems and/or CDROM), and input/output ports for communicating with other devices including keyboards, printers, displays,

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A method and apparatus for providing a secure software rental system is described. In the following description, numerous specific details, such as number and nature of messages, communication applications, etc., are described in detail in order to provide a more thorough description of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art, that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known features have not been described in detail so as not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention.

A. Embodiment of Computer Execution Environment (Hardware)
for a user computer.

Figure 1 is a diagram illustrating a remote user computer system (herein also referred to as client system) 150 connected to a central rental facility (herein also referred to as server system) 180 by electronic communications path 136A for securely renting software. The remote user computer system 150 includes user computer 102, a display device 104, a keyboard ~~114~~18, and a communication modem 106. The central rental facility 180 includes database computer 122, a display device 124, a keyboard 128, and a multi-user communication modem 126. Coupling 112 connects user computer 102 to display 104 for providing output to a user. Coupling 114 connects keyboard 108 to user computer 102 for providing input from a user. Modem 106 is connected to user computer 102 by coupling 110.



Client

Server

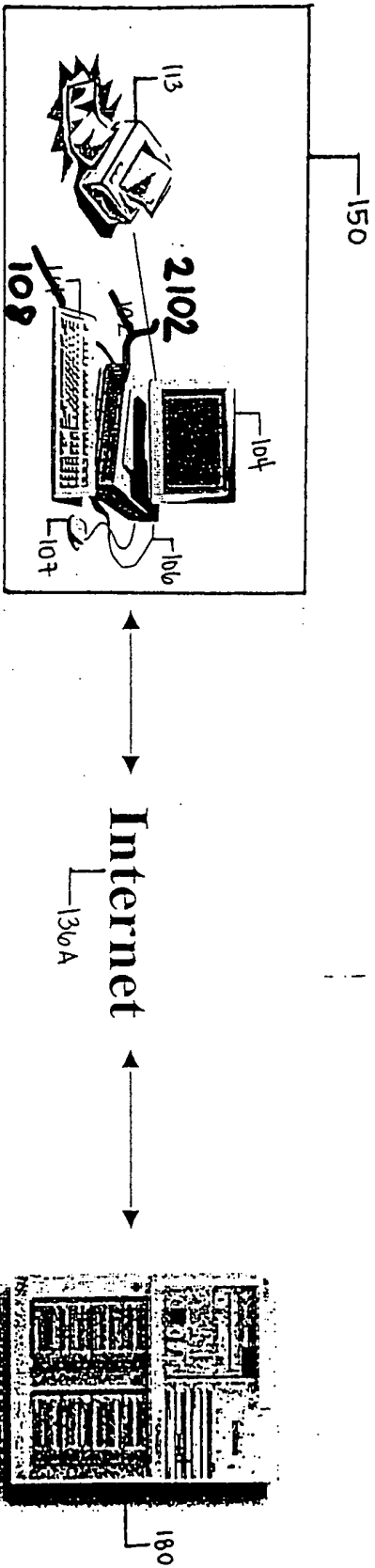


FIGURE 20